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EPA targets toxic wastes

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GRIFFITH - The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency will pursue those responsible for toxic wastes found at a Griffith federal Superfund site.

A study of soil and water at American Chemical Services has been completed, officials said, and the EPA developing a cleanup plan.

The study shows contamination is mostly underground in the form of buried wastes.

The EPA has offered to hold a preliminary meeting for interested residents on the study and will schedule a public meeting early this summer after the agency has chosen a cleanup plan, spokesman Karen Martin said.

Many homes near the 36-acre site at 420 S. Colfax St. have shallow wells, and residents over the years have expressed concern over possible surface water contamination.

The investigation shows upper groundwater contamination that extends in several directions from the site, but the EPA investigation report states no current groundwater users have been harmed by the site.

Most of the site contamination is in the form of buried waste or contaminated groundwater. Ninety percent of the total buried waste consists of organic contaminants; 7 percent, organic contaminants laced with toxic PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls; and 3 percent, various heavy metals.

The study was done to determine the nature and extent of contamination at the site, which includes an inactive portion of the Griffith landfill and the former Kapica Drum Co.

American Chemical began as a solvent recovery plant in May 1955. By the late 1960s, it was operating two on-site incinerators for still bottoms reclaiming

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solvent mixtures containing harmful volatile organic compounds, ketones and other organic compounds.

By the early 1970s, the company was manufacturing such chemicals as lacquers, paints and liquid soldering fluid.

When the EPA placed the site on the Superfund list in September 1984, it found 400 drums with

sludge and semi-solids, 980 cubic yards of organic contaminants laced with PCBs and 100 cubic yards of metal-contaminated soil.

Four years later, the EPA and about 125 in-and out-of-state waste contributors signed a legal agreement to pay for the remedial investigation and a feasibility study to evaluate ways to approach the multi-million dollar cleanup.

Many of those responsible par-

ties have sued other individuals and companies to force them to share in the study and cleanup costs.

EPA assistant regional counsel Steve Siegel said the agency anticipates locating additional parties to help pay for the cleanup.

Residents interested in a meeting on the remedial investigation may contact the EPA's Martin at (800) 621-8431.